

4.0 CONSERVATION/OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The Conservation/Open Space Element is consistent with the preservation of those natural and historic resources that are important to the well-being of the Valley and its residents. This element is intended to protect and enhance the City's natural resources and to preserve their scenic, recreational and educational value. The goals and objectives contained in this element, as well as the specific implementation measures designed to carry them out, are based on the community's desire to preserve the Valley's scenic and historic resources, and to conserve resources for future use.

The contents of this element are based on the requirements of State law for the element - a Conservation Element and an Open Space Element. These laws have remained relatively unchanged for many years, and the element meets the requirements for both elements.

4.2 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

4.2.1 PURPOSE

Although the City's Valley Area of Interest, which serves as the ultimate study area for the City Valley General Plan, does not contain any rivers, creeks, streams, or commercial fisheries, it does offer a wide range of natural and scenic resources to be considered for preservation, protection, and development. These areas are located in the protection of open space and scenic resources, and are located in the Valley's scenic resources, and are located in the Valley's scenic resources.

4.2.2 OPEN SPACE

Open space is defined as land that is not developed and is used for recreation, agriculture, or other purposes. Open space is a valuable resource and is an important part of the Valley's scenic resources. Open space is a valuable resource and is an important part of the Valley's scenic resources.

Conservation/Open Space Element

Table 4.1 in the Recreation Element provides a summary of the City's open space resources, while Figure 4.2 provides a detailed map of the City's open space resources.

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SIMI VALLEY GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

4.0 CONSERVATION/OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The Conservation/Open Space Element is concerned with the preservation of those natural and man-made features that are important to the well-being of Simi Valley and its residents. This element is intended to protect and maintain the City's natural resources and to prevent their wasteful exploitation and destruction. The goals and policies contained in this element, as well as the specific implementation measures designed to carry them out, are based on the community's desire to preserve its natural, scenic, and historic features, and to conserve resources for future use.

The contents of this element are based on the requirements of State law for two elements - a Conservation Element and an Open Space Element. These have been combined into a single chapter because of the extent to which the subject matter for both elements overlap.

4.2 ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Local Resources

Although the Simi Valley Area of Interest, which serves as the ultimate study boundaries for the Simi Valley General Plan, does not contain any rivers, beaches, forests, or commercial fisheries, it does offer a wide range of natural and man-made resources to be considered for conservation, preservation, and development. Open space areas, created for the protection of public health and safety due to seismic, flooding, or other natural hazards, have been addressed in greater detail in the Safety Element.

Public Open Space

- Within Simi Valley, public park and recreation services are provided by the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District (RSR&PD), an independent body with its own elected board of directors. A 1985 inventory, compiled by the District, indicated that there were 851 acres of local public open space at 35 locations within Simi Valley, although only a portion of this land has been developed.
- Table 6.1 in the Recreation Element provides a summary of the Park District inventory, while Figure 6.1 provides a detailed listing of individual sites and locations.
- Table 6.2 in the Recreation Element summarizes the development standards established by the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District for parkland development.

Private Open Space

- Aside from the private recreation facilities associated with certain residential developments, the greatest amount of private open space involves the outlying hillsides and canyons surrounding Simi Valley. Most of this land consists of large, undeveloped, privately-held parcels used primarily for dry farming or cattle raising.

- Within the last five years, the City has received requests to convert all or portions of some of the large ranches to residential and other land uses. Those requests which have been approved include the 3,010-acre Wood Ranch project, which involves a residential mix, a golf course, a shopping center and other uses, as well as open space.

Plant Resources and Wildlife Habitat

- Simi Valley contains a variety of habitats that provide food, nesting, and shelter for wildlife.
- Sensitive riparian habitat areas exist in several of the outlying canyons and in areas with higher groundwater tables and serve as an important ecological resource for various animal species.
- A significant population of mature trees, including oak trees and eucalyptus tree rows, exist throughout the valley. Of greatest concern for preservation are *Quercus lobata* (Valley Oak) and *Quercus agrifolia* (Coast Live Oak), the designated City tree, which are considered a unique resource for the City. Records showing the location and size of these significant oak trees are maintained by the City.
- The Santa Susana Mountains and the Simi Hills currently provide large areas of habitat which contain extensive resources for wildlife. Both ranges provide sufficient area for species with large individual area requirements and the remoteness necessary for the most human intolerant species. These coastal mountain ranges and hillside areas are parts of a much larger ecosystem including the Santa Monica Mountains.
- The hills around the eastern and western ends of the valley represent potential corridors for the movement of wildlife between the open space areas within the Santa Susana Mountains to the north of the City and the Simi Hills and Santa Monica Mountains to the south. Allowing the movement of animals between large habitat areas may be important to the ultimate survival of many species of recognized target species of animals.
- The east end of the valley hosts a State designated rare plant species, *Hemizonia minthornii*, the Santa Susana Tarplant, which has developed a niche in the massive sandstone outcropping of this area.
- The different habitats within Simi Valley provide residents and visitors with recreational and educational opportunities. It is important to provide people with the opportunity to spend time in non-urbanized areas that are accessible in a relatively short travel time period.

Mineral Resources

- Two portions of the Simi Valley Area of Interest, a 1,904 acre area located across the northern portion extending easterly and westerly of the Gillibrand Quarry site and a 371 acre area located northeasterly from, and including, the Southern Pacific Milling Company Quarry (now closed) located in the southern portion of Runkle Canyon, have been designated as areas of regionally significant construction aggregate resources.

Land use adjacent to the Gillibrand Quarry is designated as Open Space and is considered to be compatible with continued mining operations due to its low intensity of use. Access to this quarry will be maintained via the future extension of Bennett Road north to Tripas Canyon.

- The northern portion of the Simi Valley Area of Interest contains a number of small discrete oil and gas fields which contain a number of wells in production. There is a potential for further exploration and production.

Historical Landmarks and Archaeological Resources

Historical Landmarks

- Periods of Simi Valley's history are still evident today in the form of ancient Indian sites, cultural landmarks, and historical buildings.
- Twenty-five separate sites within Simi Valley are officially designated as historical landmarks. The Haigh-Talley Colony House, the Simi Adobe/Strathearn House, and the Burro Flats Pictograph Cave Paintings are included on the National Register of Historic Places.
- An inventory of historical landmarks designated by the Federal Government, State of California and Ventura County are listed in Table 4.1. Future potential sites are listed in Table 4.2.
- Sites can become designated as historical landmarks three ways: 1) owner dedication, 2) nomination by citizen or Board member, or 3) historical site survey. Ventura County has adopted the same criteria for evaluating and determining historical significance as the National Register.
- Simi Valley has adopted the Ventura County preservation ordinance with the intent to promote and to preserve historic or cultural landmarks, and historic points of interest.
- Continued cooperation between the City, the County, the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District, and the Simi Valley Historical Society is important in preserving and maintaining existing historical areas and developing future sites.

Archaeological Resources

- There are many significant archaeological sites in Simi Valley. In order to preserve these sites and to prevent theft or vandalism of artifacts, the exact locations are not made public. For planning purposes, it should be noted that these areas do exist and development should be sensitive to their preservation.

TABLE 4.1
DESIGNATED HISTORICAL LANDMARKS

National Register	Simi Adobe/Strathearn Home Haigh-Talley Colony House Burro Flats Pictograph Cave Paintings
California Historical Landmarks	Grandma Prisbrey's Bottle Village
Ventura County Historical Landmarks	Simi Adobe/Strathearn Home - Landmark #6 De La Guerra Adobe Ruins - Landmark #10 Santa Susana Railroad Depot - Landmark #29 First Simi Library - Landmark #40 Haigh-Talley Colony House - Landmark #41 Tapo Citrus Packing House - Landmark #42 Grandma Prisbrey's Bottle Village - Landmark #52 Brandeis Bardin Institute House of the Book - Landmark #53 Saint Rose of Lima Catholic Church - Landmark #66 Community Methodist Church - Landmark #67 Maier House - Landmark #68 Patterson Ranch Building - Landmark #71 Chumash Wilderness Park - Landmark #89 Chumash Village of Shimiji - Landmark #91 Wood Ranch Barns - Landmark #93 Stagecoach Road - Landmark #104 Freight Road - Landmark #105 Mount McCoy and Cross - Landmark #106 Pioneer Section, Simi Public Cemetery - Landmark #127 Giant Coast Live Oak Tree - Landmark #134 Elephant Rock - Landmark #136 Palm Trees along Alamo Street - Landmark #137 Sycamore Tree on Wood Ranch Parkway - Landmark #138 Simi Elementary School and Bungalows - Landmark #139 Scott/Cameron House and Aged Olive Tree - Landmark #140
Points of Interest	Hopetown Movie Ranch Site - Point of Interest #1 Simi School/Library/Ortega Saloon Site - Point of Interest #7

Source: Simi Valley Historical Society

TABLE 4.2
POTENTIAL FUTURE HISTORICAL LANDMARKS AND LOCATIONS
SIMI VALLEY

Bessie Printz Colony House
Gillibrand Home and Family Cemetery
Hummingbird Ranch
Santa Susana Railroad Tunnel
Marr Ranch House
Wood Ranch House
Menge House
Burro Flats Chumash Pictographs

Open Space/Rural Setting
Las Lajas Canyon
Whiteface Cliff

Source: Simi Valley Historical Society

4.3 GOALS AND POLICIES

Intent and Purpose

It is the intent of the Conservation/Open Space Element to preserve natural resources and prevent their unnecessary and wasteful exploitation, since these resources are important to the well being of the City and its residents.

The goals, policies, and implementation measures included in this Element direct development to avoid adverse environmental impacts, provide protection and an acceptable level of safety from potentially hazardous areas, and promote the health and general welfare of the City's residents.

GOAL IV-1

CONSERVE, ENHANCE, AND PROTECT THE NATURAL RESOURCES OF IMPORTANCE TO THE CITY OF SIMI VALLEY AREA OF INTEREST.

The natural features of Simi Valley should be protected from unreasonable development and preserved as an important visual resource. All appropriate measures must be taken to ensure water quality and quantity, and to promote conservation and to improve air quality.

Preservation of Open Space and Natural Features

Policy IV-1.1: The natural features and open space qualities of the hills and canyons shall be preserved.

Policy IV-1.1.1: Watersheds, watercourses, and underground aquifers in outlying areas shall be maintained in their natural state to the fullest extent possible.

Policy IV-1.1.2: Public utility and public works projects shall be designed to minimize their effect upon the natural and scenic qualities of open space areas.

Policy IV-1.1.3: Uses permitted in open space areas which require grading or other alteration of the land shall be planned to minimize the amount of grading and ensure that downstream properties and watercourses are not adversely affected by siltation or chemical run-off.

Policy IV-1.1.4: A buffer zone shall be maintained surrounding the community for the purposes of maintaining its identity and natural open space.

Policy IV-1.1.5: While it is recognized that not all open space areas will sustain recognized target species of wildlife, open space which could support those species should be preserved as part of a contiguous system which allows the movement of animals from one habitat area to another.

Policy IV-1.2: Areas used by extractive industries and for sanitary landfills shall be restored by the industry or landfill operator to a natural appearing state.

Resource Conservation

POLICY IV-1.3: The City shall regulate the location, type, and design of land uses to minimize interference with the conservation and development of limited natural resources.

POLICY IV-1.4: The City shall take steps toward attainment and maintenance of air quality standards consistent with the health and welfare of the residents of the Simi Valley Area of Interest.

Policy IV-1.4.1: The City shall support the goals and policies contained in the Ventura County Air Quality Management Plan.

Policy IV-1.4.2: Land use shall be planned to minimize vehicle miles traveled. Such uses should be balanced with the preservation of other important qualities of life.

Policy IV-1.4.3: The City shall encourage a full range of commercial services and facilities to locate in Simi Valley in order to reduce the need for shopping trips outside the area.

POLICY IV-1.5: Energy conservation measures should include passive or active systems using renewable energy sources.

Policy IV-1.5.1: Where feasible, alternative means of providing energy, especially solar energy, should be expressly encouraged.

Policy IV-1.5.2: Retrofitting with insulation and other energy-saving features shall be encouraged for existing buildings.

POLICY IV-1.6: The City shall classify and reserve for later use sand and gravel deposits and unique rocks and minerals in accordance with Public Resources Code Section 2762 and State Board Guidelines for Classification and Designation of Mineral Lands.

POLICY IV-1.7: The City shall promote water conservation and shall take all necessary steps to ensure that water quality and quantity are adequate for safe, efficient use.

Policy IV-1.7.1: An adequate supply of potable water for the projected populace shall be ensured.

Policy IV-1.7.2: Recycling of water by both the public and the private sectors consistent with the health and welfare of the public shall be encouraged.

Policy IV-1.7.3: New developments shall incorporate water-saving features. Retrofitting of existing development should be encouraged.

Policy IV-1.7.4: The City should encourage the use of attractive, low-maintenance, drought-tolerant landscaping materials in all public and private developments and improvements.

POLICY IV-1.8: The City shall encourage the development and maintenance of a system of permanent, open space lands with interconnected trails and open space views that reinforce the system's identity.

POLICY IV-1.9: The City shall cooperate with responsible agencies in the conservation and reclamation of natural resources in the region.

GOAL IV-2

PRESERVE THE EXISTING PLANT RESOURCES AND WILDLIFE HABITAT AND ENCOURAGE THE PROVISION OF ADDITIONAL LANDSCAPING.

The limited inventory of mature trees and tree rows within Simi Valley has been identified as having an historic or aesthetic quality and is considered a valuable resource. In addition, these trees and mixed habitats in the canyons and hillsides support a variety of wildlife. This goal is intended to preserve this existing habitat and wildlife and to preserve and expand the plant inventory through additional planting and landscaping.

POLICY IV-2.1: Mature trees as defined in the Tree Preservation Ordinance and tree rows of significant aesthetic or historic quality should be preserved consistent with public health and safety.

Policy IV-2.1.1: Public and private projects should be planned so that significant trees will not be damaged or destroyed.

Policy IV-2.1.2: Provisions should be made to protect permanently the City's most significant landmark trees and tree rows.

Policy IV-2.1.3: Mature trees as defined by the Tree Preservation Ordinance and tree rows on vacant or under-developed property should not be removed unless public health and safety reasons dictate otherwise.

POLICY IV-2.2: Encourage the development of landscaped medians within public right-of-way consistent with water conservation.

POLICY IV-2.3: Require that all healthy mature trees not within a required right-of-way removed as a result of construction activity be replaced with the equivalent value of landscaping in excess of normal planting requirements.

POLICY IV-2.4: Landscaping should complement the character of each neighborhood or area.

POLICY IV-2.5: Promote the installation and maintenance of street trees on public and private streets.

POLICY IV-2.6: Development should be sensitive to the preservation and protection of wildlife and vegetation which is indigenous to Simi Valley, consistent with the public health, safety or general welfare.

Policy IV-2.6.1: Habitat known to support a diversity of wildlife should be preserved.

Policy IV-2.6.2: Habitat critical to the preservation of rare or endangered species should be identified and protected from adverse impacts of development.

Policy IV-2.6.3: Riparian habitat outside of the valley floor or adjacent to the western end of the Arroyo Simi should be preserved and protected to the fullest extent practical, consistent with the public health, safety or general welfare.

Policy IV-2.6.4: Areas important to the movement of wildlife should be identified and protected from adverse impacts of development. Priority should be given to areas near the east end of Simi Valley which allow the movement of animals to and from the Santa Susana Mountains and the Simi Hills habitat areas. In addition, consideration should be given to the west end of Simi Valley which is potentially a wildlife movement corridor serving the Simi Hills and the Santa Susana Mountains.

Policy IV-2.6.5: Projects outside of the valley floor should be designed to include measures which avoid isolating areas of wildlife habitat from larger habitat areas.

GOAL IV-3

**PRESERVE, TO THE GREATEST EXTENT FEASIBLE, SIGNIFICANT
ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL FEATURES OF THE COMMUNITY.**

Fortunately, the varied and interesting history of Simi Valley is still evident today in the form of ancient fossil sites, archaeological sites, historical buildings, and landmarks. Simi Valley's past should not be forgotten and it is important to present and future residents that these areas of historical and

cultural significance be preserved. The purpose of this goal is to identify these sites or structures of significance and to encourage their preservation and restoration.

POLICY IV-3.1: Features of cultural and historical significance to the community should be identified by the City and preserved to the extent feasible.

Policy IV-3.1.1: The City should designate as landmark features structures and sites of historic, aesthetic, and special character or interest for the general public.

Policy IV-3.1.2: The designation of privately owned cultural and historic landmarks should not infringe upon the rights of those owners to make any and all reasonable uses of such landmarks which are not in conflict with the purposes of historic preservation.

Policy IV-3.1.3: The designation and preservation of landmarks should not require the expenditure of any funds not commensurate with the value of the object to be preserved.

Policy IV-3.1.4: If reasonable means are not available to ensure preservation to the extent necessary to meet state guidelines, development design shall be encouraged to incorporate the most significant features.

POLICY IV-3.2: Significant archaeological and paleontological sites shall be identified and preserved intact whenever possible.

POLICY IV-3.3: The information of historical parks, which draw together in one concentrated protected area as many of the area's historical features and archaeological artifacts as practical, shall be encouraged.

POLICY IV-3.4: The incorporation of historical sites and structures into multiple use recreation parks shall be encouraged.

4.4 IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation measures and maps contained in this section, along with the Land Use Map, assist in realizing the goals and policies of the Conservation/Open Space Element. The Land Use Map acts as a physical implementation tool and the following implementation measures as programs or ordinance implementation tools. The Policies/Implementation Matrix acts as a guide to identifying relationships between specific policies and implementation measures.

The Open Space designation, together with the Hillside Performance Standards, are designed to protect the natural open space quality of the hillsides, protect areas for agricultural use, to direct development to areas of fewer natural hazards, and to provide a balance to the more intense levels of development in the City.

Implementation Measures

Preservation of Open Space and Natural Features

- IV-A. The Hillside Performance Standards shall be used for all development on land beyond the valley floor having a slope over ten percent.
- IV-B. The development review and environmental review process shall ensure that watersheds, watercourses and underground aquifers are maintained in their natural state to the fullest extent possible.
- IV-C. The City shall require proposed public utility and public works projects, whenever feasible, to underground utilities and to provide landscaping to minimize visual impacts.
- IV-D. The City shall coordinate the preservation and management of public open space within the City's Area of Interest with the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District.
- IV-E. Reclamation plans shall be required of all resource extraction industries and landfills as required by State law.
- IV-F. The City shall use the Land Use Map and the Development Code to regulate the location, type and design of land use in conjunction with the development of limited natural resources.
- IV-G. The development review and environmental review process should ensure that open space intended for wildlife habitat is preserved as part of a connected system of large open space areas which allows the movement of animals from one habitat area to another. The identification and review of wildlife habitat and wildlife movement areas shall be supported by tangible evidence, the weight and relevance of which shall be considered and determined by the Planning Commission and/or the City Council.

Resource Conservation

- IV-H. The City shall make a good faith effort toward attainment and maintenance of Clean Air Standards consistent with the Ventura County Air Quality Management Plan.
- IV-I. The City shall support the goals and policies contained in the Ventura County Air Quality Management Plan.
- IV-J. The City shall monitor the commercial needs of the community and encourage those businesses compatible with the needs and desires of the community to relocate in the City to reduce vehicle miles traveled.

- IV-K. The City shall recruit industries which are consistent with the goals of the Ventura County Air Quality Management Plan.
- IV-L. The City shall encourage and consider state-of-the-art alternative means of energy production, water reuse, and other resource conservation methods in public and private urban and rural developments.
- IV-M. The City should develop a plan for the safe and economical use of reclaimed and ground water from local sources.
- IV-N. The City shall require currently acceptable energy-saving devices on all new development. Developers shall be encouraged to orient buildings, design structures, insulate and landscape so that temperature control may be assisted by natural means.
- IV-O. The City shall classify and reserve for future use natural resource areas in accordance with Public Resources Code Section 2762 and State Board Guidelines for classification and designation of mineral lands.
- IV-P. Water supplies and water quality shall be monitored to ensure adequate supplies are available at reasonable cost and that water quality is within State Water Quality Standards and parameters.
- IV-Q. The City shall encourage the safe recycling of water by both the public and private sector.
- IV-R. The City shall require state-of-the-art water-saving features and design in new development.
- IV-S. The development review process shall consider coordination of private trails with the Master Trails System, and the preservation and enhancement of major vista points.
- IV-T. The City shall cooperate with other agencies in the conservation and reclamation of natural resources in the area.

Plant Resources and Wildlife Habitat

- IV-U. The City's Tree Preservation Ordinance shall be used to preserve trees considered mature at the time of development.
- IV-V. The City's Tree Preservation Ordinance should be amended to restrict removal of mature trees from vacant or under-developed property without a permit.
- IV-W. The City shall adopt a master plan for street trees which catalogues all existing trees, makes recommendations for replacement and establishes criteria for areas of future conservation.
- IV-X. The City shall adopt a comprehensive manual of minimum standards for the design and construction of landscaping improvements for use in the City's development review process.

- IV-Y. The development and environmental review process shall be sensitive to the preservation and protection of indigenous wildlife and vegetation and contiguous habitat and wildlife movement corridors within the Simi Valley area. Development which may prevent the movement of wildlife from one habitat area to another should incorporate mitigation measures which may include habitat corridors and crossing structures to the extent feasible. Clustering of development should also be used to avoid or minimize isolating or intruding upon significant wildlife habitat areas. The identification and review of wildlife habitat and wildlife movement areas shall be supported by tangible evidence, the weight and relevance of which shall be considered and determined by the Planning Commission and/or the City Council.
- IV-Z. The City shall cooperate with the State Department of Fish and Game in protecting and preserving habitat of State and Federally listed threatened or endangered species.

Historical/Archaeological Preservation

- IV-AA. The Ventura County Cultural Heritage Board, the Simi Valley Historical Society, and the City Historian shall be encouraged by the City to list, map and prioritize all noteworthy historical and cultural sites within the City's Area of Interest.
- IV-BB. The City and the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District shall cooperate to pursue the preservation of historical and cultural sites and structures if such sites and structures are unable to be preserved in another manner.
- IV-CC. Areas proposed for development will be investigated for artifacts on the ground surface by the City. Should subsurface materials suspected of having an archaeological nature be discovered, the developer shall be required to cease all excavation and grading in the immediate area. The find shall be left untouched until a qualified professional archaeologist is contacted and called in to evaluate and make recommendations to the City as to disposition, mitigation and salvage in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act.

Open Space Map

The Open Space Map included in the Conservation/Open Space Element depicts areas currently designated as open space, and potential future public open space. For example, the Wood Ranch Open Space will be dedicated to the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District and will be developed when Wood Ranch is near completion. The precise boundaries of potential recreational areas are not depicted on the map and will depend on the availability of the land and the feasibility of the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District to acquire these sites. Areas within flood control channels that may provide important links to trails that will remain in open space have also been included.

GOAL IV-1: CONSERVE, ENHANCE, AND PROTECT THE NATURAL RESOURCES OF IMPORTANCE TO THE SIMI VALLEY AREA OF INTEREST.										GOAL IV-2: PRESERVE THE EXISTING PLANT RESOURCES AND WILDLIFE HABITAT AND ENCOURAGE THE PROVISION OF ADDITIONAL LANDSCAPING.						GOAL IV-3: PRESERVE TO THE GREATEST EXTENT FEASIBLE, SIGNIFICANT ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL FEATURES OF THE COMMUNITY.			
IMPLEMENTATION MEASURE	POLICIES									POLICIES						POLICIES			
	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.8	1.9	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.5	2.6	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.4
Preservation of Open Space																			
IV-A	•																		
IV-B	•	•	•																
IV-C	•																		
IV-D	•							•	•										
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Resource Conservation																			
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Table 4.3
Policies/Implementation Measure Matrix
Conservation/Open Space Element



Private Open Space

Note: Wildlife Corridor Located Generally
at the East and West End of Simi Valley

SIMI VALLEY
GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

North ↑ 0 10,000'

Figure 4.1
Private Open Space



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Private Good Service
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SEMI VALLEY
GENERAL FARMHOUSE
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